

Strauss's Outlines for a Lecture on the *Euthyphro*

Plan of exposition of idea of *Euthyphron*. Restate the whole argument with a view to monotheism.

I. Connection between “what is piety” and S.’s piety.

II. S.’s piety remains an open question.

III. The problem regarding piety: is θεοφιλέξ [dear to the gods] = or ≠ ὅσιον [holy] (customary worship of the gods)—

It is safe to assume that S. rejects the equation and therefore that the discussion leading up to θεοφιλέξ [dear to the gods] = ὅσιον [holy] serves the purpose of leading E. to it and indirectly of explaining customary piety rather than of showing its insufficiency—or of showing its necessity after its claim to truth has been disposed of.¹

IV. Critique of θεοφιλέξ [dear to the gods] = ὅσιον [holy] = customary worship of the gods (with prayers and sacrifice)

a) How do we know? The city—but the city laughs at it (cf. Crito: city = Athenians).²

the city-recognized expert questions custom.

The most important part of piety is prayers and sacrifices (cf. Xen. *Mem.* on S.’s piety).³—presupposes: men control the gods

possible reduction of piety to ordinary justice—but: ordinary justice is introduced as an independent species—and S's justice is manifest, whereas his piety is not.

V. Critique of θεοφιλέες [dear to the gods] ≠ ὅσιον [holy].

The gods do not need any worship of men—that worship is unreasonable—the right attitude is to imitate the gods. Only by imitating the gods, can one become just.

But: the gods fight → we cannot imitate but wise gods.

the justest god > idea of justice.

Relation of ideas and gods.

The problem of τύχη [chance]—the way to ὁσιότης [holiness] = control of τύχη [chance]

τύχη [chance] > ἄπειρον [infinite] / εἶδος [form/idea]

μὴ ὄν [nonbeing] / ὄν [being]

|| absolute μὴ ὄν [nonbeing] is interpreted as θάτερον [the other], negative ideas?

Denial of εἶδη [forms/ideas] + only ἕκαστα [particulars] → τὸ πρῶτον ἕκαστον [the first particular]—history-myth instead of philosophy

But how do we know that justice is good → the need for philosophizing more evident than the need for justice.

I. Connection between “what is piety” and S's piety.

The question of what piety [is] inseparable from the question of whether piety is a virtue.

The piety of S. = the piety of the philosopher = relation of piety and philosophy. Let us assume that philosophy is identical with human excellence or virtue—if the philosopher is essentially pious (not pious), piety would be (not be) essentially a part of virtue: the definition of piety depends on clarification of the relation of philosophy and piety—and therewith on answer to question of whether S. is pious. The question of what piety is, is not answered, because the question of whether S. is pious is not answered. ad 15d5–6 ad 16a1–4 ad 15b7–c10—in the light of 2nd definition, E's case has nothing to do with piety, but only with justice proper—

II. S.'s piety remains an open question.

His piety is vouched for by the expert in piety; S.'s piety is shown by his action: he defends piety against a deviation.

But: E. is a fool and in addition a man of questionable piety; not M., who is in accord with public sentiment regarding piety, but E., who disregards public sentiment regarding piety, is friendly to S.; S. starts to learn piety from an expert only after he has been accused of impiety—he apparently did not have teachers in piety previously (not having learned, he must have found out by himself—ἐξευρεῖν [to find out] (12d6) = καινοτομεῖν [mint new]—*Alc.* I 106d and *Laches* 186)— ad 12e9–13a5

above all, we do not know what piety is—hence, we do not know whether piety is not folly.

III. The problem regarding piety.

Probably every reader of the *Euthyphron* thinks he has learned something about piety in spite of the negative result of the discussion. It has been suggested: piety is not “a special department of morality, but only the religious aspect of it”⁴ or it “is no specialized art but a condition of soul”⁵ or it is “assimilation to god as far as may be”⁶ (Burnet 57). Yet this begs the decisive question: is there any connection between piety thus understood and piety as understood by the city of Athens? If the 2 notions of piety are not identical and perhaps even incompatible, the notion of piety allegedly suggested by the dialogue, would imply that S. is not pious in the ordinary sense of the term and therefore guilty.

Yet we do learn something about piety. We learn at least what is the problem of piety. The fallacy of scepticism. Is ὅσιον [holy] = or ≠ θεοφιλέες [dear to the gods]? The first answer is: they are different; it seems the last answer is: they are identical. The first answer is asserted not under the leadership of S.—the second answer under the leadership of S. (11e2–4). What does this mean?

a) the case of S.: the accusation of impiety implies that ὅσιον [holy] = νομίζειν θεοὺς πόλεως [to believe in the gods of the city] = νομίζειν ἀρχαίους θεοὺς [to believe in the ancestral gods] = the customary gods = customary worship of customary gods <is pleasing to the gods>

If S. believes that something different from the customary worship is pleasing to the gods, he implies that θεοφιλές [dear to the gods] ≠ ὅσιον [holy].

b) the case of E.: he doubtless questions the identity of the pious with the θεοφιλές [dear to the gods] by questioning one special custom. But he questions the equation implicitly. S. brings him to question it explicitly. Confronted with the shocking implication of the apparently trivial deviation from custom, he is prepared for the return to θεοφιλές [dear to the gods] = ὅσιον [holy] (the customary notion).

^v IV. E.'s thesis or the critique of orthodoxy. Heft [notebook] p. 19.

To worship the gods in the customary manner with sacrifices and prayers is pleasing to them—why?—we do not know—<no λόγος [account/argument] is possible>—they are pleased by it because they are pleased by it (cf. 15c5–6 with 10d)—no λόγος [account/argument] is possible. But—how do we know that the gods are pleased by it?

To worship the gods in the customary manner is pleasing to the gods. Why? The city tells us (ad 12a5). I.e.: hearsay (ad 6b5–6, c1–2).

a) a part of this is μαντική [divinatory art]—but the people (i.e. the city) laughs at μάντις [diviner] (ad 3b5–c5, e1–2) Cf. the “we” in 3a1.

b) the city declares that it is unjust to harm one's father

but at the same time they say that the justest god has harmed his father (5e5–6a5)

This is E.'s explicit argument.

c) the city-recognized expert questions custom—

E.: to establish what is pleasing to the gods, we cannot start from what people say, but from what the gods do: it is pleasing to the gods that we imitate them.

The hidden reason: a reasonable man wants to be imitated in his actions rather than worshipped.

<The difficulty: the gods contradict each other—to imitate the justest god> we have to know what justice is → imitation of the idea of justice—imitation of the gods is superfluous.>

<But how do we know that justice is good?—the need for philosophizing more evident than the need for justice.>

But:

a) the gods fight (contradict each other)—imitation of the gods presupposes agreement among the gods = knowledge.

We cannot imitate gods who are not wise (fighting gods are ignorant and unjust gods: ad 7b6–d6, 8d4–e10).

b) in what would imitation consist? In actions of justice: we have to imitate the justest god.

Idea of justice—we have to imitate idea of justice—knowledge of, or imitation of, the god is superfluous—relation of ideas and theology: Heft [notebook] p. 11–12. Piety superfluous: merely νομῶ [by law] (Heft [notebook] opp. p. 16)

c) But how do we know that we have to be just or that justice is good? → the need for philosophizing more evident than the need for justice.

Conditional: if imitation of gods has any meaning, it is imitation of gods who know = who know the ideas = striving to become like wise gods = philosophize.

d) ironical: the mistake of E. was to pick the justest god—he should have picked the oldest god = Uranos—to imitate Uranos—

V. Yet in the dialogue S. does not philosophize—his philanthropy and his taking care of human beings = justice.

S.'s justice: he does not accuse (ad 2a3–4; b1–6; 6b7–c7) ad 11e4ff.
an outcome of his ἀμαθία [ignorance] (ad 2c3–8)
he teaches what he knows (3c6–d9)

But: he does not engage in politics (3a2–5). He does not teach what he knows (ad 4b4–6; 5c4–8; 6a6–b6; 11b9–c6, d3–e29).

He does not defect: *Ap. Socr.* 20e8–21a3.

Heft [notebook] p. 15 p[aragraph] 2 and p. 15u–16 [“u” refers to “unten” (bottom)]

By imitating the gods, he does not practice the human virtue of justice (ad 5e5–6a5)

the πλάνη [wandering] regarding the δικαία [just things]: ad 7d1–2.

his not accusing a sign of his not loving τὰ δικαία [the just things]: 7c10ff., esp. 7e6–7, ad 7e1–8a2

The compulsion underlying the dialogue—ad 2a5–6

S. is hated (3d1–e3).

The action (ad 11e1–4) Heft [notebook] p. 20 ad 12e3–4^v

Plan.

5) E.'s heresy— <a) E.'s thesis.>

<b) why is it heretical? Because it makes impossible piety proper: the gods are not pious>

<cf. 5e5–6a3 7a7 cf. 6e10>

<→ θεοφιλές [dear to the gods] ≠ ὅσιον [holy].>

<c) how is it proved? what is its basis? 5e2–6a5.>

<d) it is a half-way house—between Meletus and Socrates—an indefensible position.>

<Either one must return to orthodoxy or one must go on to Socrates's view.>

<→ for: πάτριον [(the) ancestral] says that one must do what the gods tell us to do—>

<6) Why one cannot return to orthodoxy? Our insufficient knowledge of the gods—the fables are not knowledge—the analogy of the σοφός [wise man]: he likes more the people who do what he does than those who merely do what he tells them to do.> <Ar. EE 1249b14.⁷>

<Superiority of E.'s view.> [see paragraph 13 of “On Plato's *Euthyphron*” (1952), pp. 86–87]

<7) The end of the road—the gods contradict—one cannot imitate all the gods—one has to choose—how does E. choose? He chooses the best and justest god—primacy of ideas. The gods superfluous—piety περιττόν [odd, superfluous].> [see paragraph 14 of “On Plato's *Euthyphron*” (1952), p. 87–88]

<8) Uranos—S. more pious than E. according to E.'s view of piety.—E. and Meletus διαφθερῖν τοὺς παλαιούς [corrupting the old]: they imitate Zeus> [see paragraph 16 of “On Plato's *Euthyphron*” (1952), pp. 88–89]

<Ἑστία [Hestia]>

<9) S.'s new gods—the ideas vs. the gods.> <ποιητής [maker, poet]>

Daedalus and the λόγος [account/argument] move by themselves—E.'s unawareness of the ideas → the moving of the λόγοι [accounts/arguments] is S.'s fault. (Daedalus.) [see paragraph 17 of “On Plato's *Euthyphron*” (1952), pp. 89–90]

10) E.'s understanding of the ideas. No fundamental difference between ideas and particulars → μαντική [divinatory art] [see paragraph 17 of "On Plato's *Euthyphron*" (1952), pp. 89–90]

11) The meaning of piety: τύχη [chance]

cf. 3e2–3 with *Ap. Socr.* 42a2–5 (cf. *Euthyphron* 15e4ff.)

Burnet ad 13e9–10

Laws 709–710 (esp. 710a7–d2) 879b2–3.

798b *Euthydemus* 279c5ff.

δουλεύειν [to be a slave]: 13d—motivated by fear: 15d7

13a–b (central): piety—imitating of dogs (≠ gods)

→ Νή κύνα [by (the) dog]

14b1–7: σωτηρία [τοῦ] οἴκου [καὶ] πόλεων [salvation of (the) household (and) the city]. [see paragraph 18 of "On Plato's *Euthyphron*" (1952), pp. 90–92]

12) The need for piety: supplement of νομοθετική [legislative art]

Application to E.'s case: *Cic. Off.* III 90 cf. *Plato Rep.* II:

parents—gods

Both the multitude and the philosopher have common sense → obey the νόμος [law]

E. lacks common sense → disobeys νόμος [law]

Why? The natural element of E.'s "νόησις" [intellectual perception]—cf. his θεῖα [divine things] [see paragraph 18 of "On Plato's *Euthyphron*" (1952), pp. 90–92]

13) The paradoxes of the *Euthyphron*: descent from the higher opinion to the lower

a) practically: E. might be brought back to orthodoxy and to conformity 4e4–8; 15d—Objections to this—14c3–4: sacrifice and prayer are brought up by E—and as a jab to Socrates.

b) philosophically: α) truth; β) explanation of error. [see paragraph 19 of "On Plato's *Euthyphron*" (1952), pp. 92–93.]

15) The half-truth is the decisive omission of ψυχή [soul]. Consider *Leges* X.

Also omission of ἀνδρεία [courage], σωφροσύνη [moderation], φρόνησις [practical wisdom]. [see paragraph 20 of "On Plato's *Euthyphron*" (1952), p. 93]

- 14) "Proteus" [see paragraph 19 of "On Plato's *Euthyphron*" (1952), p. 93]
 ["15" precedes "14," ed.]

Plan

<1> Captatio: irritating half-truth. That is infinite task of understanding a Platonic dialogue> [see paragraph 1 of "On Plato's *Euthyphron*" (1952), pp. 75–76]

<2> The problem—no answer to the question of what piety is—>

<2a> Place of *Euthyphron* among the dialogues: *Euthyphron* and *Theaetetus*. *ὁσίως* [in a holy manner]—cf. "Protagorean" context. *ὁσιότης* [holiness] replaced by *ἐπιστήμη* [knowledge] (cf. *Rep.* 395c, cf. list of qualities of philosophers 487a etc.)> [see paragraphs 9–10 of "On Plato's *Euthyphron*" (1952), pp. 80–81]

<3> The characters and their intentions— a) S.>

→ <S. tries to show to E. that he does not know—he wants to attack his father—which is just as well as prudent>

<b) E.>

– the 3 positions: orthodoxy, E. and S.

<4> The action> <4> The character of E.: harmless boaster—his lack of knowledge of *ἀνθρώπινα* [human things]>

<5> E.'s heresy: a half-way house *διαφέρειν* [to differ]: 5a1> <5> His heresy>

<6> The implicit criticism of orthodoxy

7) The end of the road: the ideas—the gods superfluous—piety superfluous.

Ideas vs. gods—the central point. → Daedalus → *τέχνη* [art]

μαντική [divinatory art] → *φύσις* [nature]

8) The meaning of piety: *τύχη* [chance]> [see paragraph 18 of "On Plato's *Euthyphron*" (1952), p. 91]

Captatio: irritating half-truth. [see paragraph 1 of "On Plato's *Euthyphron*" (1952), pp. 75–76]

2) The problem—*λόγος* [account/argument]: we do not know what piety is.

ἔργον [action]—S.'s piety—why this gossip question is identical with the phil. question regarding the essence

of piety. [see paragraph 2 of “On Plato’s *Euthyphron*” (1952), p. 76]

a) E. vouches for S.’s piety—irrelevant. [see paragraph 3 of “On Plato’s *Euthyphron*” (1952), pp. 76–77]

b) S. admits his ignorance of divine things → he is not pious—he could still conform, of course yet: conflict between conformity and philanthropy → his philanthropy his real crime [see paragraph 4 of “On Plato’s *Euthyphron*” (1952), pp. 77–78]

c) But S. knows → he was impious, but not philanthropic^R.—yet: he was just—was he?^R [see paragraphs 5–7 of “On Plato’s *Euthyphron*” (1952), pp. 78–80]

d) yet: S. may have been pious in the true sense of piety—but: we do not know what piety truly is [see paragraph 8 of “On Plato’s *Euthyphron*” (1952), p. 80]

3) The place of the *Euthyphron* in κόσμος [cosmos] of the dialogues—*Euthyphron* and *Theaetetus*. [see paragraphs 9–10 of “On Plato’s *Euthyphron*” (1952), pp. 80–81]

4) The setting. [see paragraph 11 of “On Plato’s *Euthyphron*” (1952), pp. 81–85]

5) E.’s heresy: a half-way house between Meletus and Socrates—we must go beyond *Euthyphron* toward Socrates. [see paragraph 12 of “On Plato’s *Euthyphron*” (1952), pp. 85–86]

6) Socrates: the ideas replace the gods—piety is περιττόν [odd, superfluous]. [see paragraph 14 of “On Plato’s *Euthyphron*” (1952), pp. 87–88]

8) Why is it necessary to assert the primacy of the ideas?

Primacy of the ideas = primacy of necessity—vs. primacy of contingency [see paragraph 17 of “On Plato’s *Euthyphron*” (1952), pp. 89–90]

Now, blind necessity is not distinguishable from contingency (*Leg.* X: τύχη [chance] = φύσις [nature]).

→ primacy of intelligible necessity—vs. primacy of contingency

Primacy of contingency: everything has come into being out of nothing and through nothing (Hesiod)

At the beginning, there was nothing—nothing was—nothing can be. But: nothing cannot be—nothing cannot have been → everything must have come into being out of something and/or through something.

The only pre-Socratic philosopher mentioned in the title of a Platonic dialogue: Parmenides. His discovery.

There might be nothing. I can think there is nothing—I can think nothing, and I can think Being—both equally but: I cannot think nothing—to think means to think something—nothing is impossible → Something or Being is necessary: the Being which I think and which, apparently, I merely think, is—and it is necessarily. By a miracle which no one has ever fathomed, man is capable to <grasp> reach the outer rims of everything possible, the whole—to grasp the absolute necessity which holds the whole in its iron grip. This is Plato's starting point. His disagreement with Parmenides: Parmenides says Being is One—precisely because nothing cannot be, and all difference, all otherness consisting in nothing. Plato: to be = to be something = to be a What = to be a part → the Whole is not in the sense in which the parts “are”: it is beyond being.

<1. The λόγος [account or argument] of the Euthyphron does not tell us what piety is = it does not tell us whether piety = worshipping the ancestral gods according to ancestral custom is good—>

<2. The ἔργον [action] is ambiguous: S. is certainly not φιλανθρώπως [philanthropic]. Why does S. take care of E.? justice = θεραπεύειν ἀνθρώπους [to take care of human beings] = appeasing savage beasts— or: in more theological context—>

<3. E.'s heresy: piety = to do what the gods do → S.'s new gods: the ideas. Piety is superfluous (περιττόν [odd, superfluous]).>

<E.'s halfway house: no fundamental difference between ideas and particulars → μαντική [divinatory art].>

<but: awareness of ideas → denial of particulars: all fight is about principles—>

<The implicit criticism of orthodox view.>

<→ harmless ἀλαζών [boaster]>

<4.> 11. How does piety arise? Negatively: from ἄγνοια [ignorance, unawareness] of ideas → capricious

gods who must be appeased—toward whom one must behave like dogs to their human masters.

Positively: from desire to control τύχη [chance]: the gods tell us to do (they have the ἀρχικὴ τέχνη [art of ruling]) what will bring about εὐτυχία [good fortune] → function of piety is to control the uncontrollable = τύχη [chance] without the need of self-restraint and/or philosophy.

12. Why is piety necessary? a) for non-philosophers = men ruled by ἔθος [custom] and νομός [law]—the distinction of τέχνη νομοθετική [legislative art] and πολιτική [political art]—sanction for δικαιοσύνη [justice]—people who do not believe in these sanctions, who do not fear the gods, are capable of anything (*Leges* 886a, 887b5–c2, 967c). Men cannot be just without fearing the gods (contrary to definition of piety as suggested in *Euthyphron*).
application to our case: respect of old age and parents = control of ὕβρις [arrogance] and ἀκράτεια [incontinence] by sobriety
b) for philosophers—fear of δόξα πονηρίας [bad reputation] → conformity.

Euthyphron.

I <Introduction—the twofold presentation of piety → we have to understand the speech about piety in the light of the deed>

II The characters

- <a) S.: suspect of impiety—suspect of philanthropy
his piety vouched for by E—but E.'s piety itself is doubtful—and: no one knows what piety is . . .
his philanthropy—the compulsory character of the conversation—he advises E. against an imprudent action—his justice.>

E.: ἀλαζών [boaster] includes secret knowledge
γενναιότης [nobility of birth]
inferior justice>

III The action—

E. accuses his father of impiety—he must know what piety is—it is pious to do what the gods do—yet the different gods do opposite things: there is enmity among gods—enmity > difference of opinion—but: difference of opinion leads to enmity regarding δίκαια [just things], ἀγαθὰ [good things], καλὰ [noble things] → the gods have different opinions regarding δίκαια [just things] → they do not know what δίκαια [just things] are—if the gods do not know what δίκαια [just things] are, human beings do even less: one cannot anticipate in any way what an Athenian jury will judge δίκαιον [just] → it is imprudent to engage in lawsuit. [in the margin: “harsh: threat with Meletus”]

Yet: pious = to do what the justest god does → no difference of opinion regarding δίκαιον [just]—but: controversy does not concern δίκαιον [just], but application to present cases—doubtful character of application → it is imprudent to engage in law suit.

Peripeteia.

Notes

1. Strauss put a question mark next to the entire paragraph.

2. Cf. “On Plato’s *Apology of Socrates and Crito*,” in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 60: “Previously Socrates had spoken of going away without the permission, or against the will of the Athenians (48b2–c1, e3); now he replaces ‘the Athenians’ by ‘the city,’ because ‘the Athenians’ are ‘many’ or even ‘the many.’”

3. Probably referring to Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.1–10. For Strauss’s final analysis of this passage cf. *Xenophon’s Socrates* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 4–11.

4. Edward Caird, Preface, in Benjamin Jowett, *The Four Socratic Dialogues of Plato: Translated into English with Analyses and Introductions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), vi: “The dialogue ends with the apparently negative conclusion that, if we

exclude the absurd idea that men can help the gods, piety can only consist in doing what is pleasing to them—the very definition which has already been rejected as unsatisfactory. But the attentive reader will recognize that the discussion has brought us to a point of view from which piety is seen to be not a special department of morality, but only the religious aspect of it.” Parts of this passage are quoted by Burnet in his commentary on 13d9 (*Plato’s Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates and Crito* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924], 137).

5. “If there were any definite ἐργον which the gods could produce with our help, it must indeed be something ‘mighty fine.’ But in fact there is none, since δσιότης is no specialized art but a condition of the soul (ἐξίς ψυχῆς). That is the positive result which the *Euthyphro* is meant to suggest to those who know the true Socratic doctrine, though it is nowhere explicitly stated.” Burnet, *Plato’s Euthyphro*, 137.

6. "There is, indeed, no product or *ἔργον* which the gods require our help to produce; but, on the other hand, it is our whole duty so to care for our souls that they may be as wise and as good as possible (*Ap.* 29 d 7 sqq.), and this means that man's chief end is 'assimilation to God as far as may be' (*ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν*), and, as is at once explained, 'assimilation to God' means 'to become righteous and holy with wisdom' (*ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι Theaet.* 176 b1 sqq.). From that point of view the true nature of *ὁσιότης* becomes intelligible." Burnet, *Plato's Euthyphro*, 137.

7. Cf. Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 8.1249b14: οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτακτικῶς ἄρχων ὁ θεός, ἀλλ' οὐ ἕνεκα ἡ φρόνησις (for god is not a ruler who give commands, but that for the sake of which practical wisdom commands).